

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5090

As of January 19, 1995

Title: An act relating to public-private transportation initiatives.

Brief Description: Repealing authorization for public-private transportation initiatives.

Sponsors: Senators Drew, Quigley, Long, C. Anderson, Rasmussen and Fairley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/19/95.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Vicki Fabre (786-7313)

Background: New Partners: Public-Private Initiatives in Transportation (Chapter 47.46 RCW) is a program created by the 1993 Legislature to test the feasibility of privately financed transportation improvements in Washington State. The law provides a wide range of opportunities for private entities to undertake all or a portion of the study, planning, design, finance, construction, operation and maintenance of transportation systems and facilities.

The State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is authorized to solicit proposals from the private sector and to select up to six demonstration projects identified by the private sector. Projects are owned by the private sector during construction, turned over to the state, and leased back for operation for up to 50 years.

The private developer is authorized to impose tolls or user fees to recover the private sector's investments and to allow them a reasonable rate of return on investment. After maximum return on investment is reached, the state may continue to charge user fees or tolls for operation or maintenance that may be shared with affected local jurisdictions.

In May of 1994, 14 proposals from 11 private sector consortia were received by WSDOT. These were evaluated by a team of technical experts assembled by the department. At the end of the evaluation process, the secretary of the department, as required by law, recommended six projects to the Transportation Commission, which the commission adopted on August 18, 1994.

The following projects were selected: State Route 16-Tacoma Narrows; State Route 18 Corridor Improvements; State Route 520 Corridor Improvements; State Route 522 Corridor Improvements; Puget Sound Congestion Pricing; and METRO/King County and WSDOT Park and Ride Capacity Enhancements. The first four of these proposals anticipate the imposition of tolls or user fees.

Since early fall of 1994, the department and the six private consortia selected for the New Partners Program have been negotiating agreements to develop the transportation facilities described above. These agreements identify the responsibilities and commitments of each party and will drive the project development activities.

Concerns about project selection and public involvement have been raised by residents of communities surrounding the projects where tolls are proposed. These concerns have resulted in a request that the Public-Private Initiatives in Transportation Program be abolished.

Summary of Bill: The statutory authorization for New Partners: Private Initiatives in Transportation (Chapter 47.46 RCW) is repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 13, 1995.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.